



## MEETING MINUTES / 19 FEBRUARY 2019

### ATTENDANCE:

Present: Showell, Stewart, Armbruster, Baldwin, Bradley, Farley, Johnson (call-in) Lardizzone, Lopez, Magner, McMullen, Newman, Sarg (call-in), Seppala **93.3%**

Excused: Newstadt

Unexcused:

Guests: Ginny Yelland (Wilmington VAMC) (call-in), Bill Peterson (Delaware Veterans Home), Liz Byers-Jiron, Dave Skocik (Delaware Veterans Coalition), Pat Cerchio (First State Women Warriors), Kim McMullen, Kevin Gunning (Delaware Department of Labor), Jack Tillmon,

### CHAIRWOMAN'S OPENING REMARKS:

Requested moment of silence for recently deceased SFC (ret) Larry Shelton  
Acknowledged all who have recently lost someone close  
Thanked commissioners and partners for remaining busy

### MEETING MINUTES:

Approved, motions: McMullen and Lardizzone

### ADMINISTRATIVE REMARKS:

#### **Wilmington VAMC – Ginny Yelland, Director (telephone)**

New Public Affairs Officer is Brendan Mackie

Advertising for two patient advocate positions

Communicating with Friends of Delaware Veterans Home about supporting (possible reimbursement) their dental suite proposal

Still working new Kent County (Dover) CBOC, technical team close to selecting a developer

#### **Delaware Veterans Home (DVH) – Bill Peterson, Director:**

Residents – 64

Not allowing admissions due influenza cases (three active)

- Caution from spreading

- Asked family and friends not to visit

Seven candidates are awaiting admission (will occur following influenza concern)

Construction on back of home is progressing well

State survey was positive and awaiting official results

Picked up the 911 Remembrance Bell, awaiting installation projected for April

Blue Suite is awaiting contractor, was due 1 February but is having challenges securing Milford building permits

- Opening now projected for June

(Farley) Inquired about firing or fining contractor

Those decisions are up to the State of Delaware and there's still 15 days available before another contractor can be considered

Working with the Wilmington VAMC and Department of State on operation expenses associated with dental suite

- Discussed being able to see veterans outside the veterans home (may be restricted because of funding)

**Home of the Brave, Director Jessica Finan:**

Not present

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

Kevin Gunning, Department of Labor

Is retiring the end of February

Thanked the commission's veteran service officers and administrative staff for positively supporting Delaware's veterans

Commissioner Farley presented a farewell certificate and provided comments

- Highlighted work with Governor's Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness
- Highlighted constant desire to be helpful (toward veterans)

Liz Byers-Jiron

20 Sep: Stand Down date, passed out save the date flyers

Women's Tea

- Commissioner Lopez is emcee and commissioner Showell is featured speaker

Dave Skocik

Today the Post-Acute Medical facility is having a veterans/first responders' meet and greet

**COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

**Bear Veterans Memorial Cemetery, Commissioner Armbruster:**

Interments – 84 (-3)

Administrator Cooke is still on medical leave

**Millsboro Veterans Memorial Cemetery, Commissioner Bradley:**

Interments – 28 (-3)

LED light project is complete

Heating and air conditioning (restrooms) project is complete

New columbarium wall construction will begin late summer or early fall

**Health and Human Services, Commissioner Sarg:**

Nothing to report

**Legislative Affairs, Commissioner McMullen:**

23 Jan: DCVA information table was at Legislative Hall

Working date to present before Joint Veterans Committee

Still need to contact individual legislators for legislative support

- Already secured sponsor for military retiree pay income tax exemption recommendation (Baldwin) Mentioned working with Representative Ramone on disabled veteran property tax exemption legislation

Delaware needs tax exemption to appear veteran friendly

- Recent transitioning veterans shy away from states that tax their military incomes (Kirby / Showell) Encouraged commissioners to seek sponsorship and/or support for legislative initiatives

- Can use the DCVA legislative recommendations as a template

(Bradley) Asked about a status report on HB 18

No change since it went forward with the House Veterans Affairs Committee

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS:**

DVTF Previous Month: Applications 8; Granted 6 (75%); Awarded \$5,150.23; Balance - \$64,752.00  
Spoke with Representative Briggs-King regarding military retiree pay tax exemption  
- Department of Finance has reached out for retiree census  
(Showell) Inquired about when the annual report will be completed  
Annual report is being worked and reviewing data for inclusion  
(Farley) Share the information with your organizations for additional support

**ORGANIZATIONAL REPORTS:**

Commissioner McMullen (Air Force Sergeants Association - AFSA)

17 Jan: Chapter meeting

- Approved 2019 budget

- Began planning for 5K Walk/Run in April (start and finish at AMC Museum)

- Filled executive council openings

Division 1, Professional Airman's Conference is 21 - 23 March 2019 in Burlington, MA

- Guest include CMSAF11 Murry, AFSA International President Carlton, Executive Director Reed, Lobbyist Lokovic and Cory Etchenberger, author and son of Medal of Honor Recipient CMSgt Etchenberger.

13 Feb: Attended MOAA fundraiser at Outback Steak House

Commissioner Armbruster (American Legion - AL)

12 Feb: State oratorical contest was held and Dorothy McCormick (home school) from Millsboro is the state champion

National Commander Brett Reistad will visit Delaware 3 – 5 March with a Dover Downs dinner

- Celebrating 100 year anniversary

Boys State information has been forwarded to state high schools

Baseball team awarded "Best Team in Delaware" by sports writers' association

Commissioner Bradley (American Veterans - AmVets)

23 Jan: Attended DCVA table at Legislative Hall and attended House Veterans Committee meeting where they voted in favor of House Bill 18

25 Jan: Attended the Millsboro Veterans Cemetery kickoff meeting for the columbarium expansion

15 – 16 Mar: Attending AmVets spring NEC meeting at BWI Airport Marriott, MD

Received a call from Commissioner Lardizzone, DAV to see if they could leave their van at Post 2 on April 17th, and the executive board approved

Commissioner Lardizzone (Disabled American Veterans - DAV)

Department Service Officers submitted 77 claims

Department provided emergency assistance for eight veterans (food, rent, electricity, heat, and gasoline)

23 – 27 Feb: DAV Mid-Winter Conference, Washington DC

- Meeting House and Senate Veterans Committees

9 – 11 Mar: DAV District 4 (DE, CT, NJ) Conference, Atlantic City NJ

Commissioner Johnson (Korean War Veterans Association - KWVA)

20 Feb: Celebrating Black History Month with lunch at the CHEER center (Georgetown)

16 Mar: Both chapters will have members represent the Korean War at the Ruck March (Dover AFB)

- Each chapter receives donated funds

6 Apr / 0800 – 1000: Flapjack fundraiser at Rehoboth Applebee's

- All you can eat \$7.00, assisted by Cape Henlopen JROTC

Assisted a veteran with fuel expenses

Working with St. Jude's St. Vincent DePaul Society

Planning this year's donations from the Wounded Warrior Fund

Attended KWVA meeting, chapter 193, in Florida

Commissioner Farley (Marine Corps League - MCL)

Nothing to report

Commissioner Sarg (Military Officers Association of America - MOAA)

Eugenia Thornton is president of the Dover chapter

Thanks for supporting the Outback Steakhouse fundraiser

7 Apr: MOAA is storming Capitol Hill, Washington DC

Commissioner Magner (Military Order of the Purple Heart - MOPH)

The department is preparing to visit Delaware ROTC/JROTC programs

- The Leadership Medal and Certificate will be presented to the top cadets (selected by the school)

- Participating high schools / universities: Appoquinimink, Caesar Rodney, Cape Henlopen, Christiana, Delaware Military Academy, Dover, First State Military Academy, Glasgow, Indian River, Mount Pleasant, Polytech, Seaford, Smyrna, Sussex Central, University of Delaware, William Penn, and Woodbridge

25 May: Departmental Convention at Mission BBQ, Dover

8 – 12 Jul: National Convention, Branson MO

(Baldwin) Acknowledged significance of MOPH Leadership Medal, giving examples of how recipients became exemplary active duty performers

Commissioner Newman (Veterans of Foreign Wars - VFW)

2 – 6 Mar: Legislative Conference, Washington DC

Commissioner Baldwin (Vietnam Veterans of America – VVA)

Seeking to establish trust fund endowment for Friends of Delaware Veterans

- Initial cost \$25K plans on raising monies through book selling fundraising

- Provides continuous funding

Working with General (ret) Vavala and Jim Webb on establishing Veteran Job Resource Center at Wilmington University

- For all veteran students, not just that university

Pursuing disabled veterans' tax legislation

General Service Administration provides shopping for veteran service organization and veteran owned businesses

- Individuals are not taking advantage

- Need to spread the word about this benefit

- Working webinars and other marketing tools

Commissioner Showell (At Large, affiliated with Delaware National Guard)

2 Mar / 1100: DNG Change of Command from Major General Timmons to Major General (select) Berry

30 Mar: Delaware Tech's Director, Military and Veteran Students, Dave Strawbridge is retiring (taking an active duty billet)

Commissioner Newstadt (At Large, affiliated with Jewish War Veterans)

Nothing to report

Commissioner Seppala (At Large, affiliated with Military Order of World Wars)

23 Mar: MOWW, Wilmington Chapter in association with the Delaware Military Heritage and Education Foundation will sponsor a Youth Leadership Conference

- Held at Delaware Military Museum
  - Presentations on leadership, patriotism, and free enterprise
  - Three JROTC cadets, each, from seven high schools
  - Delaware Civil Air Patrol members will also be in attendance
  - Another conference will be held later this year for southern Delaware schools
- Encouraged members to visit the museum

Commissioner Lopez (At Large, affiliated with Delaware Veterans)

6 Feb: Conducted final executive and general member meetings as commander for DelVets Post 2

- 9 Mar: Installation of new officers

6 Feb: Attended Women's Military Tea meeting, next meeting 20 Feb

13 Feb: Attended Technical Advisory Committee, Mobility in Motion and DART meeting

13 Feb: Supported MOAA fundraiser at Outback Steakhouse

19 Feb: Attended Convoy of Hope meeting

- Lead for Veterans Services
- Several VA outreach and community homeless shelters have committed to attend
- Will be held at Legislative Mall

Commissioner Stewart (At Large, affiliated with student veterans associations)

Nothing to report

## **TERM COMPLETION:**

### **EVENTS:**

21 Feb / 0830: Delaware Joining Forces, DNG Biden Center

21 Feb / 1830: Senator Carper's Service Academy Night, Delaware Tech (Terry)

8 Mar / 0900 – 1400: Brain Injury Association in Delaware Conference, Rollins Center

18 April / 0830: DJF Meeting, Adams Service Center, Georgetown

23 April / 1730: Friends of Delaware Veterans Meeting, DCVA Conference Room

### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

By Laws Review Committee Information (OPEN)

Legislative Proposal Process (OPEN)

### **NEW BUSINESS:**

(Newman) Discussed VFW's proposal (addition) for HB 18, House Substitute 1

- Presented by Marc Garduno for replacement of "surviving spouse" language
- Add "end of life expenses" to list of recipient qualifications
- - Next of kin with qualifying need can request a grant

- Understands funds should be used for veterans (thus surviving spouse removal)  
Conversations included, what are the “end of life expenses”  
Wouldn’t include full funeral expenses as they are expensive  
(Showell) asked that VFW verbiage be forwarded to commissioners for review  
VFW proposal has not been submitted to the House Veterans Affairs Committee  
Commissioners are encouraged to discuss with the service organizations and legislators  
Verbiage may have to be specified to determine itemize expenses

**ITEMS FOR THE GOOD AND WELFARE OF THE ORGANIZATION:**

29 Jan: Department of State hosted DCVA strategic plan update  
- Reviewed goals and believes commissioners should be included in marketing and position descriptions  
- - Discussing and telling what commissioners are doing in the community  
- - Providing data on those actions

**CLOSED SESSION:**

Closed the phone communications during the session  
Ten commissioners were in place  
Voted on review committee’s by-laws recommendations  
Voted on Delaware Veterans Home concern

**NEXT MEETING:**  
**LOCATION:**

**Tuesday, 19 March 2019 at 10:00 AM**  
**Delaware Commission of Veterans Affairs**